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Letter dated 20 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to our many previous letters addressed to you concerning the practice of the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom in the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) of placing holds on humanitarian contracts concluded by the competent Iraqi authorities under the memorandum of understanding of 20 May 1996 and the oil-for-food programme and of doing so on flimsy pretexts and in order to inflict further harm on the Iraqi people and deprive the memorandum of understanding of its basic rationale, which is to meet some of the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq.

The policy of placing contracts on hold has reached extremes that can no longer be tolerated. As of 13 March 2001, there were 1,722 contracts on hold with a total value of 3.370 billion dollars, representing one third of the value of all the contracts under which deliveries have been made to Iraq since the inception of the programme. When we also take account of the fact that many of the items to be supplied under the contracts on hold are complementary to items that have already arrived under other contracts but that cannot be put to use in their absence, it is possible to appreciate the dimensions of the crime that the United States and the United Kingdom persist in committing.

The most recent examples of the inhuman and immoral positions maintained by the United States and the United Kingdom in the Committee include the placing on hold of contracts for serums and vaccines intended for children on the pretext that such items can be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. On 2 January 2001, they also placed a hold on contract 801078, which the Ministry of Health had concluded with the French company Nutris for the supply of cytogenic media, on the grounds that it included dual-use items. I should here like to state that the items to be supplied under this contract are for exclusively medical uses and are employed in chromosome tests for children with congenital defects, mental retardation and other hereditary conditions caused by chromosomal disorders. Their availability helps in providing genetic counselling to families in which there are such persons, and they are used in the various fields of molecular genetics in many research centres, in vitro fertilization centres and fertility clinics. Such media have also been used in Iraq since the early 1980s in the diagnosis of certain types of leukaemia.

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The misuse of United Nations mechanisms by the United States and the United Kingdom in order to settle accounts with the people of Iraq has reached such extremes that the United Nations can no longer let it pass in silence, and we appeal to you to end this practice.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed A. **Al-Douri**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative